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Development As Freedom

In *Development As Freedom*, Amartya Sen, recipient of a Nobel Prize in Economics, writes about the information he presented in a five lecture series as President Fellow at the World Bank in 1996. Due to the fact that the book is based on a series of lectures, the first half of the book discusses the development theory Sen advocates, and the second half gives a variety of detailed examples where his ideas can be implemented. The second half is much more dense, and at times I found myself lost. However, Amartya Sen does a wonderful job of presenting his overarching theme of using freedom as a tool for development in the first part of his book.

According to Sen, freedom can be evaluated to measure the various freedoms people have in a given population, and can demonstrate the effectiveness in terms of development of having a certain freedom. Therefore, countries can measure their level of freedom, and can observe the effectiveness of having those freedoms. In the book, Amartya Sen lists five types of freedoms that should be protected for the sake of development.

The first is political freedom. In essence, this freedom is based on the idea that people should be able to express what is important to them. Giving the entire population the ability to participate will make the development process more representative. One of the key examples Amartya Sen provides is the fact that famines occur more often in non-democratic countries because in democratic countries, people can express their needs, and they will more likely be addressed.

The second is economic freedom. People should be able to freely participate in economic markets—consumption, production, and exchange—to achieve their economic entitlement. No person should be forced out of markets into poverty, lasting unemployment, or slavery.

The third is social freedom. These freedoms refer to the arrangements made in health care, education, welfare, and so on, to better the lives of individuals. Amartya Sen notes these can be considered subjective freedoms, and they can change based on the ideals of the population. In other words, some of these freedoms are subject to political discretion. However, freedoms that promote social equality, and substantive freedoms that hinder the ability to practice other key freedoms should be protected to improve a country's ability to develop. For example, illiteracy makes it harder to make informed political decisions, therefore, educational opportunities should be provided to the population.

The fourth is transparency guarantees. Governments need to be as transparent as possible to assure general public is informed. Thereby, developing trust between the public and decision makers.

The final freedom is protective security—a guarantee that no population is forced into unsafe conditions, such as, poverty, starvation, or slavery.

Amartya Sen discusses how all these freedoms are interconnected, and work together to catalyze development. He notes all countries can improve the amount of

freedom they provide, however, the five freedoms can be prioritized differently based on their needs.

Collectively, I felt *Development As Freedom* was a great book, however, gets somewhat technical in the latter half. It was interesting being exposed to the more fundamental improvements that could be made prior to distributing large amounts of aid. I felt this book was more self-help focused than other things we have read in the class. The information can be applied to the United States in some ways as well.